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IDENTICAL LETTERS DATED 19 APRIL 1999 FROM THE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF AUSTRALIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to bring to your attention copies of identical letters dated 19 April addressed to Slobodan Milosevic, President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and Milan Milutinovic, President of Serbia, from Malcolm Fraser, Special Envoy of the Government of Australia, concerning the two Australian aid workers held in detention by the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would arrange for the letters to be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) John CRIGHTON
Chargé d'affaires

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Annex

Identical letters dated 19 April 1999 from the Special Envoy of the Government of Australia addressed to the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the President of Serbia

As a consequence of my appointment by the Government of Australia as Special Envoy for the specific purpose of securing the release of the two Australian CARE workers, Steve Pratt and Peter Wallace, currently being held by the Yugoslav authorities, I convey the following personal considerations to you.

CARE Australia is a non-governmental, non-political, developmental and humanitarian organization that works in many countries worldwide. Australia's network of relationships has made it possible for CARE Australia to work in a number of countries which would be difficult for some States, for example: the Islamic Republic of Iran, previously, and Iraq, Myanmar and Yugoslavia today. It is against this background that, despite the current hostilities, CARE decided to continue operations in Yugoslavia looking after refugees, largely of Serbian origin, from earlier conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia. In coming to this decision, CARE has been influenced by the fact that the Australian Government has maintained its representation in Belgrade. As the Australian Government has stated, Australia is not a member of NATO nor is it involved in the conflict.

As a humanitarian organization, often working in conflict situations, CARE does not and cannot take sides in military conflicts. It is concerned only to help people in distress, many of whom would die without the support that CARE provides.

In Yugoslavia, CARE employees needed information concerning the state of the countryside so that they could plan the delivery of food, medical supplies and heating fuel to over 70,000 Serbian refugees in 600 locations under their charge. A significant portion of the refugees supported by CARE are from the Krajina. Over the last five years, CARE has provided over 20 million dollars in support of these refugee programmes. Even after the military action had begun, CARE was maintaining support for approximately 50 per cent of these refugee locations. The nature of situation reports relating to this humanitarian activity were detailed and described military impediments to the distribution of humanitarian supplies. It can be understood that, in a state of war, in a country that feels besieged and under serious threat, emotion, tension and suspicion can run high. Such circumstances would not be unique to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, but would be repeated in almost any country experiencing a similar military situation.

Against this total background, the nature of the situation reports prepared by CARE employees in Yugoslavia could be described as naive and capable of misinterpretation. This information was used solely for the purpose of serving an advanced humanitarian mission.

CARE is concerned with maintaining its relationship with Yugoslavia because it wishes to continue its humanitarian mission and, after the conflict, would

seek to facilitate further cooperation between Serbian communities in Australia and Yugoslavia in ways that would assist national reconstruction.

As the Special Envoy of the Government of Australia, on the basis of the above personal representation, I ask you to release Steve Pratt and Peter Wallace into Australian hands at the earliest opportunity with the undertaking that they will leave the jurisdiction of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

(Signed) Malcolm FRASER